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Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

The Relevance of Accommodation in Understanding Intercultural and Intracultural  
Relationship Quality

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Social Ecology

by

Nicole M. Froidevaux

Thesis Committee:  
Associate Professor Belinda Campos, Chair  
Associate Professor Jessica L. Borelli  
Distinguished Professor Karen S. Rook

2019



## DEDICATION

To

my parents and my siblings

Who have inspired me throughout life and throughout my career. Thank you for the unwavering support and for the countless hours you put in listening to my monologues about my work. Without you, some of my ideas and lightbulb, problem-solving, moments would not have been possible. Without you, I wouldn't have the strength to pursue my dreams amidst the challenges, and without you, I wouldn't be as readily exposed to cultural differences as I am.

my friends and loved ones

Thank you for always being there for me throughout the ups and downs, and when I lack the flexibility to engage in friendship. Thank you for being patient with me as I juggle this whole graduate school thing, and thank you for continually welcoming me back after I lose myself in my work. You are always a refreshing reminder of what reliable, kindness, dedication, and support look like. Thank you for always pushing me to be and do the best I can. Thank you for never questioning whether I am cut out for this career path, but thank you for picking me up when I question it myself. Thank you for balancing me out and for being so flexible with my schedule. Not only do you support me, but you instill in me the kind of confidence that I wish I naturally had; you push me to do better, and to never put myself down when I think I fall short.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Belinda Campos and Dr. Jessica Borelli, for their constant support and belief in my work and myself as a student. You both are not just advising me through graduate school, you are mentoring me through my career and pushing me to become a better researcher and mentor. You both are inspirational women in academia, and you give me the strength to pursue an academic career.

I would also like to acknowledge my final committee member Dr. Karen Rook, whose feedback and support pushed me to think more deeply, more critically, and more carefully about my work.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge my research assistants who helped me with this project, and who constantly push me to be the best mentor and teacher I can be. Their selfless work continuously allows my work to be above par, and their constant commitment reminds me that the future of science is bright.

Lastly, I would like to thank the participants in my study who are allowing me to further examine romantic relationship processes among different types of couples. No psychological research would be possible without the voluntary will of our participants.



## **ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS**

Intercultural and Intracultural Relationship Satisfaction and Commitment: The Varying  
Role of Accommodation

By

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Master of Arts in Social Ecology

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Associate Professor Belinda Campos, Chair

Research comparing intercultural and intracultural relationship quality has been inconsistent. The current study examined whether accommodation, the specific reactions to relationship problems, can shed new insight on that mixed literature. Undergraduate women ( $n = 207$ ) completed an online survey containing measures of relationship quality, accommodation, and demographic characteristics. Analyses revealed that women in intercultural relationships reported greater relationship commitment and satisfaction relative to women in intracultural relationships. Active forms of accommodation, or handling problems in a direct way, were related to commitment (but not satisfaction) more strongly in the intracultural group relative to the intercultural group. Passive forms did not vary by group for commitment nor satisfaction. These findings suggest that active accommodation may be less relevant for intercultural compared to intracultural relationship commitment. Altogether, these findings highlight the importance of studying relationship processes in their distinct contexts.

## INTRODUCTION

In our increasingly diverse society, people are more likely than ever to form intimate relationships with someone outside of their own cultural background (PewResearch, 2019), especially compared to when these types of unions first became legal. These relationships, which can be among people from different races, ethnicities, religions, countries, socio-economic statuses, and more, are referred to as *intercultural* relationships. As the prevalence of intercultural couples continues to rise, relationship scientists need to understand how these relationships are and are not comparable to *intracultural* relationships, where two partners are both from the same cultural background. Few studies have examined intercultural couples specifically, however the studies that do compare relationship quality between intercultural and intracultural couples find inconsistent results. These inconsistencies may stem from the ways these couples manage their differences, which may be differentially linked to couple quality. In this study, I examined whether *accommodation*, an important relationship process for understanding how individuals respond to partner breaches of everyday good behavior, is associated with two indices of relationship quality, commitment and satisfaction. The goal of this study was to further understand whether relationship quality is determined differently between individuals in intercultural compared to intracultural relationships.

### **Intercultural Couples: Managing Difference**

Intercultural couples may be faced with challenges that have implications for relationship quality such as differences in perspectives, customs, attitudes, and opinions on appropriate/desired behaviors within a relationship. Perhaps for this reason, intercultural couple relationship quality has been found to be lower (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008)

and their divorce rates higher than intracultural couples (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Additionally, Zhang and Van Hook (2009) found that intercultural couples experience greater instability when compared to intracultural couples. Furthermore, being in an intercultural relationship has been found to be predictive of break-up one year later (Reiter & Gee, 2008) as well as divorce 10 years later (Bratter & King, 2008). However, the literature is mixed; for example, another set of studies has found that interreligious couples in Hawaii reported similar relationship satisfaction compared to intrareligious couples (Graham, Moeai, & Shizuru, 1985). Additionally, interethnic couples have been found to report similar levels of relationship satisfaction when compared to intraethnic couples (Negy & Snyder, 2000; Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998). Still other studies find that relationship satisfaction is higher for interracial couples compared to intraracial couples (Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006). The mixed pattern in findings may be due to differences in the years or regions of the U.S. in which these studies were conducted or may reflect a societal change in attitudes since interracial marriage became legal. Additionally, the inconsistencies may be related to how individuals in intercultural relationships manage their differences.

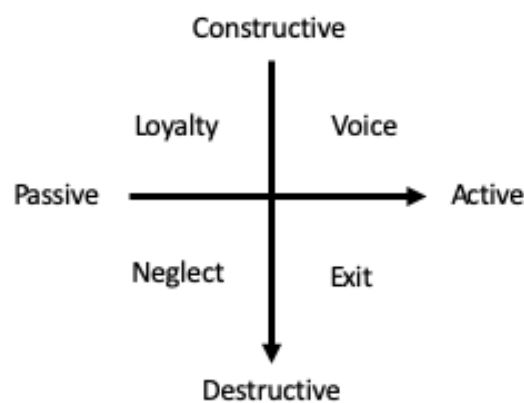
### **The Importance of Similarity**

A robust literature supports the similarity-attraction hypothesis (e.g., Davis, 1981), which argues that partner similarity is positively related to attraction and satisfaction and negatively related to relationship dissolution (Morry, 2009). Similarity is theorized as an important factor for close relationships because it reduces the uncertainty that individuals might otherwise experience when interacting with their partner (Parks & Adelman, 1983). Similarity, or congruency in how the couple views the world, also facilitates social

interactions in ways that may allow couples to enjoy spending time with one another to a greater degree since they share desires and interests (Burleson, Kunkel, & Birch, 1994). An emerging literature, typically focusing on intracultural relationships, also suggests that perceived similarity is the most important facet of close relationship functioning (see Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2008 for a meta-analysis), suggesting if a couple sees themselves as similar this is what is important. Therefore, when individuals in a relationship self-identify as being different are they expected to experience poorer relationship quality? Perhaps for these couples the way they react to their differences is what is more relevant for relationship quality.

**Accommodation.** For couples for whom the difference in cultural background is salient, there is an additional layer of relationship maintenance that involves navigating their differences in pro-relationship ways. Although all couples react to problems of everyday life, the type of responses may be of particular importance for intercultural couples. It could be important to react to problems in a way that will be perceived as culturally sensitive in an attempt to avoid escalation of the problem. Many studies have examined accommodation in non-specified couples, likely unintentionally including intercultural couples as well. However, it is not a requirement for researchers to adequately report the demographic break down of their sample when disseminating findings. Therefore, the current study is the first to actively compare accommodation between individuals in self-identified intercultural and intracultural relationships. Accommodation is a process that relationship scholars have studied as an internal process within close relationships, which involves the reaction that an individual can have to their partner's breach of good behavior (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991).

These responses are conceptualized as varying along two dimensions – a constructive-destructive dimension and an active-passive dimension (see Figure 1). The more constructive an act the more accommodative it is while acts low in constructiveness (higher in destructiveness) are considered to be lacking in accommodation. Additionally, acts can be more explicit and active, allowing a partner to pick up on the cues more easily, or more passive, void of cues. These two-dimensions can be conceptualized as four quadrants. The first, *Voice* involves communicating, attempting to communicate, or working through problems, which is rated as highly constructive and highly active. Second, *Loyalty*, involves waiting for the difficulty to improve (e.g. sitting quietly until the partner calms down), which can be seen as constructive but passive. Third, on the contrary, *Exit* involves doing something such as leaving or harming the partner as a form of retaliation, which is therefore considered destructive and active. Fourth, *Neglect*, or allowing the relationship to deteriorate, is destructive and passive.



*Figure 1.* Two-dimensional conceptual model of the different types of accommodation.

A robust body of empirical research has found that these different reactions to problems relate to relationship quality; constructive forms have been found to weakly relate to couple relationship quality, while variations in the use of destructive forms has been found to relate strongly to degree of distress/non-distress in couples (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). In the intercultural couple context, voice may be particularly important for intercultural couples as they react to problems that might arise from their differences. Similarly, exit and neglect may also take on a unique importance for intercultural couples as a type of response to be avoided, given that these couples are likely to experience more opportunity for problems and may have societal incentives to exit the relationship. Therefore, avoiding destructive acts could be a good predictor of relationship quality. However, there is mixed literature around loyalty; a study by Drigotas, Whitney, and Rusbult (1995) examined the “peculiarity of loyalty” to better understand why other studies do not find loyalty as a reliable predictor of outcomes. The authors interpreted loyalty as involving a passivity and ambiguity that may render this type of response difficult for a partner to perceive. In sum, existing evidence led me to consider that engaging in pro-relationship behaviors and avoiding harmful ones may be one way that intercultural couples can meet the challenge of navigating difference.

### **The Current Study**

As an initial step toward better understanding intercultural couples, I examined accommodation processes in a sample of young adult women who reported being in an intercultural or intracultural relationship. I focused on women because studies have found that accommodative responses differ between women and men (Drigotas et al., 1995). To facilitate recruitment of a sample of women that were in intercultural relationships that

might otherwise be challenging to recruit, I used an online cross-sectional self-report research design. Given the mixed literature, I first tested whether relationship commitment and satisfaction were similar or different for women in intercultural relationships compared to their counterparts in intracultural relationships. Next, I tested whether accommodation related to commitment and satisfaction differently by relationship type. I hypothesized that the interaction between voice and relationship type would result in a stronger association between voice and commitment/satisfaction for individuals in an intercultural relationship compared to individuals in an intracultural relationship. Lastly, I hypothesized that the interaction between exit/neglect and relationship type would result in a stronger association between exit/neglect and commitment/satisfaction for individuals in an intercultural relationship compared to individuals in an intracultural relationship.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Undergraduates at a large research university on the West Coast of the United States ( $N = 384$ ) participated in a larger study on relationships. The final study sample was comprised of female partners who reported being in a romantic relationship for at least 3-months ( $n = 207$ ). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 29 years old ( $M = 20.73$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ), and were mostly heterosexual (87.5%). The sample was fairly ethnically diverse with a majority self-reporting as Mexican ( $n = 68$ , 32.7%) followed by White/Caucasian ( $n = 45$ , 21.6%) backgrounds (see Table 1). Participants self-reported whether they were in an intercultural ( $n = 110$ , 52.9%) or intracultural ( $n = 97$ , 46.6%) relationship (see measures section for exact definition).

All measures and procedures were approved by the University Institutional Review Board. Participants signed up for the online study using the university's Social Science human subjects research pool and were compensated for their study participation with extra credit that they were able to apply to a participating course of their choice. When participants signed up for the study they were automatically directed to an online consent form. The only inclusion criterion was that they be at least 18 years old. If they fit this criterion and consented, they were directed to the online survey.

## Measures

**Rusbult accommodation measure.** The Rusbult Accommodation Measure (Rusbult et al., 1991) consists of four four-item subscales that represent the following reactions to relationship problems: voice (e.g. *when my partner behaves in an unpleasant manner, I calmly discuss things with him/her*), loyalty (e.g. *when my partner does something thoughtless, I patiently wait for things to improve*), exit (e.g. *when my partner says something really mean, I threaten to leave him/her*), and neglect (e.g. *when my partner is rude to me, I ignore the whole thing*). Participants rated their level of agreement on each item using a Likert-scale that ranged from 0 (*never do this*) to 8 (*constantly do this*). Item responses pertaining to each subscale were averaged to derive a subscale score ( $\alpha_{\text{voice}} = .79$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{loyalty}} = .69$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Exit}} = .74$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{neglect}} = .72$ ). Higher scores on each subscale indicated greater endorsement of the response type.

**Perceived relationship quality components inventory.** Relationship quality was measured using the commitment (e.g. how committed are you to your relationship) and satisfaction (e.g. how satisfied are you with your relationship) subscales from the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson, &



Thomas, 2000). These two subscales each contained three items that asked how much of each quality the participant felt matched their opinion of their relationship/partner. Participants rated their level of agreement on each item using a Likert-scale that ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Item responses pertaining to each subscale were averaged to derive a subscale score ( $\alpha_{\text{commitment}} = .91$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{satisfaction}} = .95$ ). Higher scores on each subscale indicated greater endorsement of the commitment or satisfaction scale.

**Relationship type.** Participants were presented with the following definition of an intercultural relationship and then asked to self-identify whether they were in such a relationship 1 (*Yes*) or not 0 (*No*):

*By intercultural, we mean a relationship between individuals of different races/cultures/ethnic groups. One example would be a relationship between an individual of Asian background and an individual of Latino background. However, an intercultural relationship may also be between two individuals of Asian background, for example someone who is Chinese and someone who is Korean. Given the above definition, are you currently in an intercultural romantic relationship?*

Self-identification of intercultural status has been found to better capture couples who may perceive cultural difference in their relationship that fall outside of census-based race/ethnic categories (Shenhav, Campos, & Goldberg, 2017). Relationship type was asked at the end of the questionnaire, along with demographic questions, to ensure that an evoked salience of this self-identification did not influence responses to other study measures.

**Relationship length.** Participants reported on the number of months they have been in a relationship with their partner by choosing one the following options: 1 (*1 month*), 2 (*3-6 months*), 3 (*Less than 1 year*), 4 (*1-2 years*), 5 (*2-5 years*), 6 (*over 5 years*).

### **Data Analytic Plan**

First, I examined the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for demographic and key study variables. Next, to determine accommodation on relationship commitment or satisfaction varied as a function of relationship type (intercultural or intracultural), relationship type was entered into the model as a moderator. Lastly, relationship length was added as a covariate in all regression analyses. Given the number of moderation analyses run, all significant tests (at an  $\alpha < .05$ ) were corrected using the Holm-Bonferroni procedure (Holm, 1979) to deal with familywise error rates for multiple tests using this formula: (target alpha level / (number of significant tests – rank in order of smallest significance) + 1). In doing so, this test reduces the possibility of analyses that result in a Type 1 error by correcting the resulting alpha levels by the number of tests that are done in order of the smallest resulting alpha level. Therefore, all significant alpha levels were corrected using the above formula and results were interpreted using the corrected alpha level. These analyses were run using the PROCESS Version 3 macro model 1 in SPSS (Hayes, 2017). PROCESS calculates the association between  $x$  (explanatory variable) and  $y$  (dependent/criterion variable) at each value of the categorical moderator(s). In the initial step of the regression, the main effects are entered. Then, the interaction term is entered in the second step of the regression resulting in coefficients that represent an interaction term that relates to the dependent variable over and above the main effects. All hypotheses

and analyses were pre-registered on the Open Science Framework (OSF),  
<https://osf.io/45vsd>.

## RESULTS

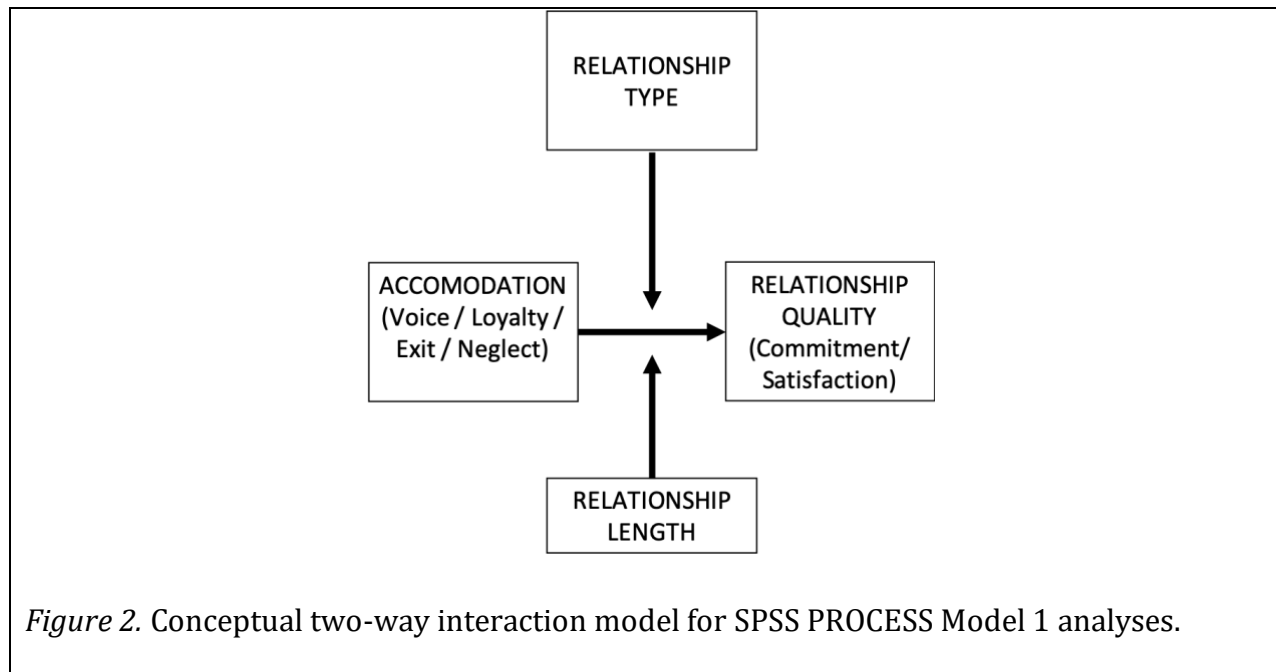
Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 and bivariate correlations between key study variables are presented in Table 2. When comparing relationship length between the two types of relationships, an independent samples *t*-test revealed that individuals in intracultural relationships reported having been together significantly longer ( $M = 3.90$ ) compared to individuals in an intercultural relationship ( $M = 3.47$ ),  $t(205) = -2.00$ ,  $p = .048$ .

### Preliminary Analyses

Participants in intercultural relationships reported significantly greater commitment,  $t(205) = 2.27$ ,  $p = .03$  and satisfaction,  $t(205) = 2.55$ ,  $p = .01$ , than their counterparts in intracultural relationships. Individuals in intercultural and intracultural relationships did not statistically differ in their reports of any accommodation subscales: voice [ $t(205) = 0.80$ ,  $p = .42$ ], loyalty [ $t(205) = -1.13$ ,  $p = .26$ ], exit [ $t(205) = -2.07$ ,  $p = .04$ ], nor neglect [ $t(205) = -0.92$ ,  $p = .36$ ].

### Moderation Analyses

To test if the association of accommodative processes with relationship commitment and satisfaction varied by relationship type, over and above relationship length, I tested the association between each accommodation subscale on commitment and satisfaction moderated by relationship type.



**Predicting satisfaction.** First, the four types of accommodation were used in the model to predict relationship satisfaction.

*Voice.* Contrary to hypotheses, after statistically controlling for relationship length, the association of voice with satisfaction was not moderated by relationship type ( $R^2 = .13$ ,  $b = -0.14$ ,  $p = .15$ ). However, there was a significant main effect of voice ( $b = 0.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on satisfaction such that greater voice was related to greater satisfaction.

*Loyalty.* After statistically controlling for relationship length, relationship type did not significantly moderate the association of loyalty with satisfaction ( $R^2 = .08$ ,  $b = -0.12$ ,  $p = .26$ ). Additionally, there was no significant main effect of loyalty ( $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = .93$ ) on satisfaction.

*Exit.* After statistically controlling for relationship length, relationship type significantly moderated the association of exit with relationship satisfaction ( $R^2 = .17$ ,  $b = 0.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ). However, when using the Holm-Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, the corrected p-value was found to be .025. Given the p-value for exit on satisfaction was above

this correction, I accepted the null hypothesis that there was no significant interaction for exit and relationship type on satisfaction, thus I did not move forward with interpreting the interaction. However, there was a significant main effect of exit ( $b = -0.33, p < .001$ ) on satisfaction such that greater exit was related to lower satisfaction.

*Neglect.* Lastly, relationship type did not significantly moderate the association of neglect with satisfaction ( $R^2 = .19, b = .07, p = .46$ ), after statistically controlling for relationship length. However, there was a significant main effect of neglect ( $b = -0.31, p < .001$ ) on satisfaction such that greater neglect was related to lower satisfaction.

**Predicting commitment.** Next, the four types of accommodation were used in the model to predict relationship commitment.

*Voice.* After statistically controlling for relationship length, the association of voice with commitment was moderated by relationship type ( $R^2 = .28, b = -0.23, p = .01$ ). When using the Holm-Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, the corrected p-value was found to be .016, which allowed me to reject the null hypothesis and move forward with the interpretation of the interaction. Further investigation of the simple slopes (see Figure 3) indicated that the association was weaker for those in an intercultural relationship ( $b = .12, p = .04$ ) than those in an intracultural relationship ( $b = .36, p < .001$ ).

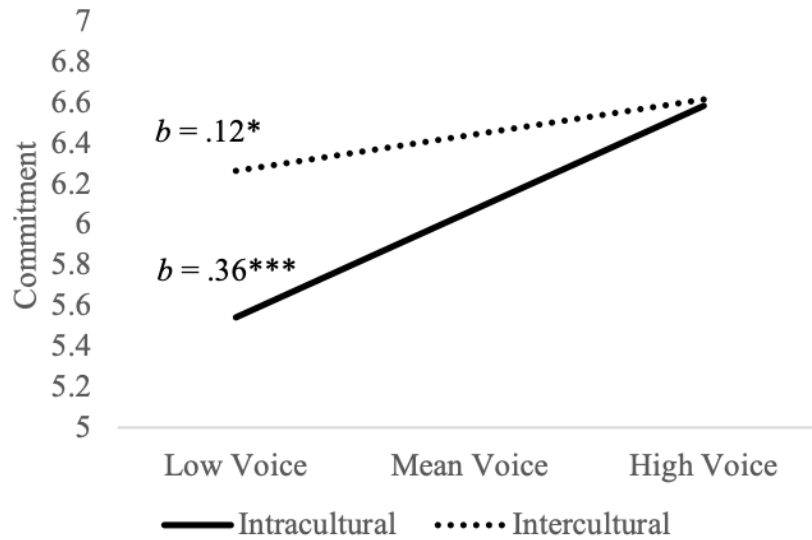


Figure 3. Interaction between voice and relationship type predicting commitment.

*Loyalty.* After statistically controlling for relationship length, relationship type did not significantly moderate the association of loyalty with commitment ( $R^2 = .16$ ,  $b < -0.001$ ,  $p = .99$ ). Additionally, there was no significant main effect of loyalty ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $p = .61$ ) on commitment.

*Exit.* After statistically controlling for relationship length, relationship type significantly moderated the association of exit with relationship commitment ( $R^2 = .26$ ,  $b = 0.25$ ,  $p = .004$ ). When using the Holm-Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, the corrected p-value was found to be .012, which allowed me to reject the null hypothesis and move forward with the interpretation of the interaction (see Figure 4). Simple slopes revealed that the association of exit and commitment was not significant for those in an intercultural relationship ( $b = -0.08$ ,  $p = .17$ ). However, the association was significant for individuals in an intracultural relationship ( $b = -0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

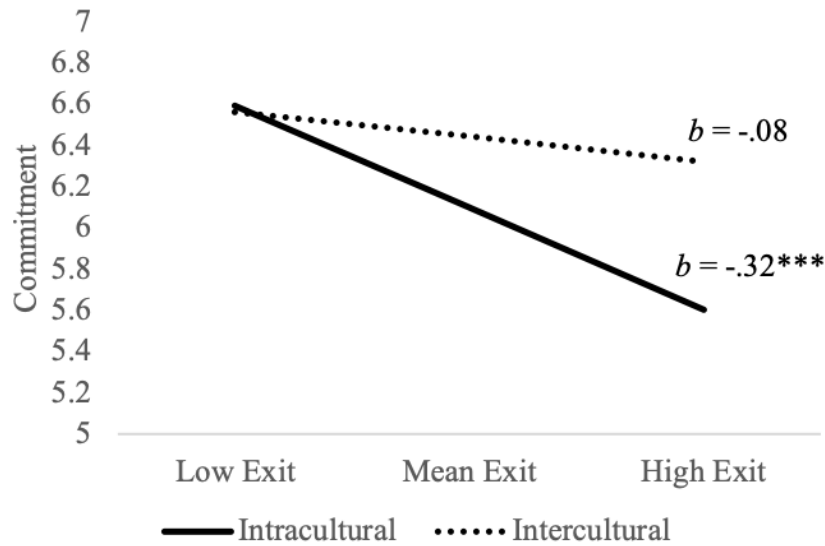


Figure 4. Interaction between exit and relationship type predicting commitment.

*Neglect.* Relationship type significantly moderated the association of neglect with commitment ( $R^2 = .30$ ,  $b = 0.18$ ,  $p = .04$ ), after statistically controlling for relationship length. However, when using the Holm-Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, given that the exit on satisfaction null hypothesis was accepted, all further analyses were accepted. Therefore, I did not move forward with interpreting the interaction. However, there was a significant main effect of neglect ( $b = -0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on commitment such that greater neglect was related to lower commitment.

## DISCUSSION

In the current study, I aimed to examine whether relationship quality differed between individuals in intercultural and intracultural relationships. Additionally, I aimed to better understand if individuals in intercultural relationships differ from individuals in intracultural relationships in how they react to relationship problems, accommodate, and whether this difference relates to their ability to thrive. This study examined the role of accommodation, a well-established relationship process, on relationship quality among

individuals in an intercultural compared to individuals in an intracultural relationship. Although previous studies may have inadvertently included samples with individuals from both groups, this study is the first of my knowledge to explicitly examine the two groups separately to examine the role of accommodation on relationship commitment and satisfaction. Results revealed that the exit and voice accommodative processes were related to commitment differently between individuals in intercultural and intracultural relationships. Therefore, examining these relationship types separately is imperative to better understanding specific aspects of relationship quality among these groups and to determine whether well-established relationship processes function similarly for different types of couples.

### **Relationship Quality Variations**

The cross-sectional nature of this study precludes our ability to proclaim causal interpretations however I offer the following possibilities for understanding why intercultural and intracultural relationship commitment and satisfaction differ.

**Wider dating pool.** I found that participants in intercultural relationships reported higher quality relationships when compared to participants in intracultural relationships. There are various potential reasons for this finding. First, high relationship quality may stem from an individual having wider options of people they are willing to date, which can include dating outside of one's cultural group. It could be that individuals with a wider dating pool are able to be more selective and less likely to settle for a partner who is less than an ideal fit. Therefore, in line with the similarity-attraction hypothesis, it could be that these individuals are actually more similar and attuned to one another beyond their demographic and cultural backgrounds, which is a factor that merits future study.



Additionally, it could be that participants in intercultural relationships have had previous relationships with same-cultural individuals that were less than ideal, thus they opted to open their dating pool and now feel more committed and satisfied than they previously have. However, given the cross-sectional nature of this study, it is unclear how past experiences might be informing future relationships.

**Individual differences.** Next, individuals in intercultural relationships could be self-selected into these partnerships – they could be more open to experiences and more accepting of difference, allowing them to express a greater relationship quality given that personality has been found to relate to relationship satisfaction (e.g., Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004). It also could be that my sample is representative of a group that is particularly open to diversity and more exposed to cultural variation, thus surrounding themselves with other like-minded individuals. Therefore, individuals within this sample may be more inclined to experience a high-quality intercultural relationship. It is possible that openness to working through differences to build strong, high quality relationships may be more important than how visibly similar two partners are. Therefore, future studies should further examine the types of people and reasons why people embark on these types of relationships to better understand if this contributes to differences in relationship quality.

It also could be that different samples include individuals from different backgrounds and that different cultural matches (e.g. a Latino partner with a White partner, or a Black partner with an Asian partner) experience cultural problems differently. However, our current study did not collect data on the participant's partner, therefore I cannot speak to the cultural match between partner-1 and partner-2 but future studies

should examine whether the specific cultural match within intercultural couples influences results. Additionally, it could be that our sample is more diverse than previous studies. Therefore, future studies should parse out whether the demographics of the person reporting on their intercultural relationship influences results. It could be that one member of the couple feels more marginalized than their partner so their relationship quality is influenced regardless of who they are in a relationship with. Therefore, understanding how these results vary based on the specific background of each partner would further the current results around how contextual factors might interact with relationship processes to influence relationship quality.

### **Intercultural and Intracultural Relationship Differences**

I found that *Voice*, the active constructive accommodative process, and *Exit*, the active destructive process, were statistically significantly related to commitment but this association was weaker for individuals in an intercultural relationship compared to individuals in an intracultural relationship. A potential explanation for why these processes were less related to commitment among individuals in intercultural relationships could be that these individuals are aware of (or concerned with) factors outside of their relationship, and that this awareness contributes to their relationship quality more than how they react to problems in their relationship. For instance, societal pressures or parental opinions might outweigh the importance of accommodation making it less salient for relationship quality. Compared to individuals in an intracultural relationship, individuals in an intercultural relationship who are aware of cynical outlooks on their relationship may be more focused on combatting these factors and less focused on their own relationship dynamic when considering their relationship commitment.

Interestingly, after correcting for multiple tests the only tests that were still significant were the active acts, voice and exit, but not neglect. Therefore, active acts of relationship reactions to problems may be more influential than passive acts, and may be what really aid individuals in an intracultural relationship in determining their relationship quality but less important for individuals in intercultural relationships.

Next, I found that there was no significant interaction between loyalty nor neglect in predicting commitment (after correcting for multiple tests) nor satisfaction. However, the main effect of neglect on both commitment and satisfaction was fairly strong, which is consistent with the literature, suggesting that neglect may be more universal, functioning the same way for individuals in an intercultural compared to intracultural relationship. Given the ambiguous and somewhat undetectability of loyalty, the null results are also consistent with the literature.

### **Strengths & Limitations**

To my knowledge, this study is the first to specifically examine how accommodation differs among individuals in intercultural and intracultural relationships. Since society continues to increase in ethnic diversity and intercultural relationships are becoming more prevalent, the time is right to gain a better understanding of intercultural relationships and the conditions under which these relationships do well. Although there is a robust literature on intimate relationship processes, less has been done on intercultural couples specifically. Additionally, participants were allowed to self-identify their relationship type, which allows for the inclusion of individuals who perceive their partner to be culturally different from themselves for reasons that other measures (e.g., census categories) might miss. For instance, if researcher identified, I might have missed couples with individuals

who both identified as Latino but from different counties and therefore self-identify as intercultural. Another strength of the current study is the diversity of Racial/Ethnic groups among participants.

However, the current study has limitations that should be noted. As the first study within a growing area of research, the current study solely used self-report measures of participant experiences. Additionally, the current study did not include a diverse gender or sexual orientation sample. It could be that these results are particularly or exclusively relevant to heterosexual women. Next, the current study only included reports from one member of the couple, when reports from both would further enrich our understanding of relationship functioning between groups. Lastly, the current study did not examine the rates of problems that the participant had to react to within their relationship limiting our understanding of different distress levels within the sample.

### **Future Directions**

Future studies should address some of these limitations by corroborating these findings by using behavioral measures as well as collecting data from both members of the couple. Results would be strengthened by understanding how each member of the couple experiences their relationship, if they perceive different kinds of conflict, and if accommodation is based on how couples respond to *each other* rather than just how one responds to perceived problems. Next, future studies should examine whether results differ based on the demographic make-up of the couple and whether certain cultural backgrounds experience a stronger association between accommodation types and relationship quality. Next, as discussed previously, the current study did not examine the rate of perceived (or actual) transgressions committed by either relationship partner.

Future studies should examine the influence of differences in rates of transgressions. Accommodation may relate to relationship quality for non-distressed couples but may be less influential if couples are experiencing a high rate of conflict. Lastly, further understanding how much parental disapproval, or “outside stressors” the couple experiences will further elucidate possible reasons for different experiences between intercultural and intracultural relationship. A question that arose with the current results is whether intercultural couples experience disapproval from friends and family as well as society. It could be that a lack of additional supportive factors and luxuries are what contribute to inconsistencies in the literature. Future studies should examine whether support/disapproval of the relationship contributes to how accommodation and other relationship processes relate to relationship outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This study lays the ground work for future studies that aim to understand how intercultural relationships function and whether intracultural couples function differently. As intercultural relationships continue to grow in numbers with uncertainty as to whether societal acceptance is growing as rapidly, it is important to understand how these couples can build thriving relationships, and ways to combat any additional hardships they may face. The results of the current study suggest that the way individuals react to problems may be an important factor that can differentiate outcomes for intercultural and intracultural couples and can begin to uncover how couples who may be navigating cultural differences can build thriving relationships. This study, and future studies including intercultural couples, will allow for relationship science to better understand the role of

pro-relationship processes within different contexts, information that is timely within a society that is increasing in diversity.

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## Appendix

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics for key study variables.*

<i>Measures</i>	Intercultural	Intracultural
	n (%)	n (%)
	110 (52.3)	97 (46.6)
Race/Ethnicity		
Mexican	30 (27.3)	38 (39.2)
Mixed-Race	4 (0.04)	6 (0.06)
Southeast Asian	11 (0.01)	23 (23.7)
Chinese	18 (0.16)	20 (20.6)
White	28 (25.45)	17 (17.5)
Other Latino	13 (0.12)	4 (0.04)
Korean	5 (0.05)	4 (0.04)
Middle Eastern	7 (0.06)	3 (0.03)
Indian	4 (0.04)	2 (0.02)
Pacific Islander	6 (0.05)	2 (0.02)
Native American	2 (0.02)	0 (0.0)
Japanese	4 (0.04)	3 (0.03)
Black	4 (0.04)	1 (0.01)
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age	20.70 (1.85)	20.76 (1.58)
Relationship Quality		
Commitment*	6.41 (1.02)	6.08 (1.05)
Satisfaction*	6.16 (1.01)	5.77 (1.18)
Accommodation Response		
Voice	5.57 (1.48)	5.41 (1.46)
Loyalty	3.55 (1.66)	3.79 (1.33)
Exit*	1.81 (1.54)	2.25 (1.47)
Neglect	2.36 (1.60)	2.55 (1.38)
Relationship Length*	3.47 (1.55)	3.90 (1.51)

*Note:* \* depicts means that statistically differ between groups.

\* $p < .05$

Table 2. *Correlation table of key study variables.*

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1Age	1	.10	.07	.07	.03	-.08	<b>-.06</b>	<b>.22*</b>
2Commitment	.05	1	.66**	.20*	-.11	<b>-.13</b>	-.34**	.42**
3Satisfaction	-.00	.65**	1	.20*	<b>-.23*</b>	<b>-.17</b>	-.41**	.17
4Voice	.18	.55**	.36**	1	<b>.11</b>	-.38**	-.34**	.07
5Loyalty	.05	.00	<b>.01</b>	<b>.21*</b>	1	-.02	.39**	-.13
6Exit	.15	<b>-.43**</b>	<b>-.39**</b>	-.48**	-.00	1	.55**	-.03
7Neglect	<b>.27**</b>	-.47**	-.37**	-.39**	.22*	.57**	1	-.17
8Relationship Length	<b>.04</b>	.30**	.16	.17	.14	.07	-.01	1

Note: The top half are correlations for individuals who identify as being in an intercultural relationship; the bottom half are correlations for individuals who identify as being in an intracultural relationship. Bolded items depict correlations that differ between groups.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 3. *Regression table predicting commitment and satisfaction from voice, relationship type, and the interaction between the two.*

Step	Commitment			Satisfaction		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
<i>R</i> <sub>2</sub>	.28***			.13***		
Constant	3.33***	.37	[2.59, 4.06]	3.94***	.43	[3.09, 4.79]
Voice	0.36***	.06	[0.23, 0.48]	0.27***	.07	[0.13, 0.42]
Relationship Type	1.66***	.48	[0.71, 2.62]	1.18*	.56	[0.25, 0.51]
$\Delta R_2$	.03			.01		
Interaction	-0.23**	.09	[-0.40, -0.07]	-0.14	.10	[-0.34, 0.05]
Relationship Length	0.21***	.04	[0.13, 0.30]	0.09	.05	[-0.00, 0.19]

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table. 4. *Regression table predicting commitment and satisfaction from loyalty, relationship type, and the interaction between the two.*

Step	Commitment			Satisfaction		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
<i>R</i> <sub>2</sub>	.16***			.08**		
Constant	5.27***	.33	[4.62, 5.93]	5.38***	.37	[4.65, 6.10]
Loyalty	-0.04	.07	[-0.19, 0.11]	-0.01	.08	[-0.17, 0.16]
Relationship Type	0.42	.37	[-0.31, 1.16]	0.85*	.41	[0.04, 1.66]
$\Delta R_2$	.00			.01		
Interaction	-0.00	.09	[-0.19, 0.19]	-0.12	.10	[-0.32, 0.09]
Relationship Length	0.24***	.04	[0.16, 0.33]	-0.11*	.05	[-0.01, 0.21]

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001

Table 5. *Regression table predicting commitment and satisfaction from exit, relationship type, and the interaction between the two.*

Step	Commitment			Satisfaction		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.26***			.16***		
Constant	5.82***	.23	[5.37, 6.27]	6.01***	.26	[5.50, 6.52]
Exit	-0.32***	.06	[-0.45, -0.20]	-0.33***	.07	[-0.47, -0.18]
Relationship Type	-0.15	.22	[-0.58, 0.27]	-0.09	.24	[-0.57, 0.39]
$\Delta R^2$	.03			.02		
Interaction	0.25**	.90	[0.08, 0.41]	0.22*	.10	[0.03, 0.40]
Relationship Length	0.25***	.04	[0.17, 0.34]	0.13**	.05	[0.03, 0.22]

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 6. *Regression table predicting commitment and satisfaction from neglect, relationship type, and the interaction between the two.*

Step	Commitment			Satisfaction		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
<i>R</i> <sub>2</sub>	.29			.19***		
Constant	6.10***	.25	[5.61, 6.59]	6.21***	.28	[5.66, 6.76]
Neglect	-.35***	.07	[-0.48, -0.23]	-0.31***	.07	[-0.46, -0.17]
Relationship Type	-0.06	.24	[-0.54, 0.42]	0.20	.27	[-0.34, 0.74]
$\Delta R_2$	0.02			0.00		
Interaction	0.17*	.08	[0.01, 0.34]	0.07	.10	[-0.12, 0.26]
Relationship Length	0.23***	.04	[0.15, 0.31]	0.09*	.05	[0.00, 0.18]

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$